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CHUCK HAGEL

P R E S S R E L E A S E



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Statement by U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel on the House Agreement to Exempt Food and Medicine from Unilateral Sanctions

Similar legislation offered by Senators Hagel and Ashcroft, the “Food and Medicine for the World Act,” was approved earlier this year by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as part of a larger foreign assistance bill. The language is also included in the Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill.

“This agreement is good news in our long fight to exempt food and medicine from the unilateral sanctions imposed by the U.S. We have already established support for a stronger measure in the Senate. Senator Ashcroft and I offered a similar provision last year to the Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill, which passed by a vote of 70 to 28.

This effort is about ensuring U.S. sanctions hurt those they are imposed against – foreign governments, not U.S. producers or innocent civilians. This measure establishes a basic principle – food and medicine are the most fundamental of human needs and should not be included in unilateral sanctions. It also sends a strong message to our customers and our competitors around the world ... our agricultural producers are going to be consistent and reliable suppliers of high-quality agricultural products.

This is an important issue to our agricultural producers. In 1996, we told them the future of agriculture was in the marketplace. Yet we have done little to open up closed markets or reduce trade barriers to their products. When we shut our producers out of foreign markets, we do not hurt foreign leaders. They buy their agricultural goods from someone else. We hurt our farmers and ranchers. I am hopeful we see this exemption become law this year and finally open additional markets to the exports of our grain, livestock and other commodities. The agreement reached today in the House is a strong step forward and I applaud all of those who were willing to come to the table and make this work.”